

1. Need and Rationale

The Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), in collaboration with the Midwest Art Conservation Center (MACC), requests \$39,255 for a statewide planning grant as part of the Institute of Museum and Library Services' Connecting to Collections program. This proposal flows directly from the current work of the two organizations and the state's commitment to the conservation of its cultural heritage.

Cultural heritage institutions in Minnesota have embraced the Health Heritage Index's planning efforts, participating in the surveys, attending the National Conservation Summit in June 2007 and supporting staff members to plan and manage HHI activities. While there has not been any statewide needs assessment to date, the overall estimated assessment of the status quo in Minnesota is not radically different from any other state profiled in the HHI. Given that, the goals of the planning process are to evaluate those needs in a practical framework: to identify the available resources, determine the priorities and plot a strategy for implementation.

The primary stakeholders of the project are grouped in several overlapping categories: the 1100 members of the Minnesota Library Association (MLA); the over 400 archival and historical organizations that work with the MHS and Minnesota's State Historic Records Advisory Board (SHRAB); the 78 contributors to the Minnesota Digital Library (MDL); and the roughly 25 organizations whose staff are represented in the Minnesota Association of Museums (MAM).¹ All of these groups are concerned with conservation and all have addressed the topic in some form or another during recent meetings. Those activities have raised the level of awareness, but have not led to any ongoing, statewide collaborations.

As a result, most conservation efforts come ex post facto: after the damage is done, after the disaster occurs and after the opportunity for any cost-effective, preventive measure passes. Again, in this, Minnesota fits the national pattern. As in most states, our needs significantly exceed our means, but we can certainly get a much better return on our investments with a targeted approach that carefully fosters planning and collaboration, leading to sustainable means to share both expertise and resources on a routine basis.

Minnesota differs from the norm in one important way; in it, there are two very strong organizations, the MHS and MACC, which support solid conservation programs with outreach and education components. These provide the foundation for more extensive and more comprehensive efforts, through which the partners can reach more of their constituents and address more of their constituents' needs.

The MHS has a staff of five professional conservators and two conservation assistants in its program.² Together, they have an extensive range of experience and expertise in most facets of conservation. One staff member's efforts are devoted entirely to outreach and education, leading a variety of workshops and programs on an annual basis. The program's website includes a wealth of informational resources, particularly on emergency response and disaster planning, that already support the activities of repositories throughout the state.

The Midwest Art Conservation Center is a non-profit regional center for the preservation and conservation of art and artifacts providing treatment, education, and training for museums, historical societies, libraries and other cultural institutions. MACC has twelve dedicated, full-time staff members committed to educational advancement, high-quality services and up-to-date techniques. Eight full-time staff members are specialists in the conservation disciplines of paintings, objects,

¹ For details, see the pertinent web sites: www.mnlibraryassociation.org; www.mnhs.org/localhistory/mho/; www.mnhs.org/preserve/shrab/shrab.html; www.mndigital.org; and www.minnesotamuseums.org.

² The program and its activities are fully described at www.mnhs.org/preserve/conservation/index.html.

paper and textiles, providing treatment services and consultations. Two more conservators provide general collections care and consultation through specialized trainings, workshops, surveys and disaster response. For 30 years, MACC has consistently provided professional quality preservation and conservation services and training to area institutions and the public.

Knowledge gleaned from the two organization's current programs has informed this proposal. As the MACC and MHS have supported outreach programs for some time, worked closely with a broad range of repositories and have responded to crises such as the recent flood in southwest Minnesota, they are well placed to make a preliminary assessment of which HHI recommendations are germane to Minnesota. The clear sense is that repositories need guidelines and methods that emphasize preventive action, to avoid making the costly mistakes that simply increase the already daunting difficulties of preserving their collections. They need actionable and practical educational tools, things they can do, particularly things that will help them to develop and implement emergency plans. As well, the repositories have already voiced the need for models for the preservation of digital and audio/visual collections, including the specifications and checklists to manage effectively the inevitable migration and conversion to formats and media appropriate for access and long term storage.

2. The Planning Process

The planning grant would serve as the formal equivalent of the audience and needs analysis tools currently described in the National Leadership Grant tutorials. The primary goals would be:

- to confirm and broaden the preliminary assessment of preservation needs
- to evaluate formally the stakeholders' capacities
- to determine the process, resources and skills necessary to meet the needs
- to promote the awareness of preservation needs and
- to form the partnerships to support an implementation grant proposal.

The MHS and MACC would begin the process with planning activities working primarily through the existing professional associations and groups in the state: the SHRAB; the Minnesota Library Association; the Minnesota Association of Museums; and the Minnesota Digital Library. Together, they provide forums to the principal groups of repositories in the state; as well, they provide the foundation for partnerships that can promise ongoing programs for education and support of conservation efforts.

The planning process will take 14 months, beginning 1 May 2008, and include these phases, with these activities:

- Preparation (May-June 2008): initial management team and advisory board meetings; review and approval of work plan; creation of project web site.
- Research and assessment (June-October 2008): focus group meetings with constituent/stakeholder group representatives, online survey, preliminary review and analysis of pertinent models, guidelines and standards.
- Evaluation (November 2008-January 2009): draft assessment of Minnesota's conservation priorities; examine models of emergency planning process and guidelines for preservation of digital content and audio/visual materials; draft implementation grant proposal to IMLS
- Review and approval (February- May 2009): presentations at constituent/stakeholder meetings; circulation of drafts of products; advisory board meeting; revision of products

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- Completion (May-June 2009): post completed and approved products online; submit final reports to the IMLS; submit implementation grant proposal to IMLS

To manage the process, the MHS and MACC will establish a team from their staffs. Sheryl Ogden will be the project director/coordinator, working with Colin Turner and Patricia Ewer from the MACC and Bob Horton and Brian Szott from the MHS. The management team will work with an advisory board made up of representatives of the stakeholders in conservation, representatives of the major associations and of larger and smaller repositories in the state. Certain associations and institutions have already agreed to participate and nominated a representative; other appointments are still underway. The board will include:

- Tilly Laskey, Curator of Ethnology, Science Museum of Minnesota
- Charles Spetland, Associate Librarian, University of Minnesota
- Elisse Aune, Archivist, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
- Bill DeJohn, Director, Minitex
- Minnesota Association of Museums representative
- SHRAB representative
- Como Park Zoo representative
- Ben Leonard, Director, Nicollet County Historical Society

The advisory board will meet formally twice during the course of the project. In the first meeting, it will review and approve the work plan and help select and arrange the focus groups and their participants. In the second meeting, towards the close of the project, it will review and approve its products. The MHS will create and maintain a project web site to support the work of the team and the board, as well as to communicate to the stakeholders and to provide public access to the project's work products.

As part of the research and assessment phase, the management team will convene four focus groups made up representatives of the primary constituent/stakeholders – museums, libraries, archives and other repositories. Each focus group will consist of 8-10 people from a separate category and will meet in different regions of the state, to ensure a geographical mix and representation. In these meetings, the participants will discuss with the management team their current conservation practices; their resources; their priorities; and their willingness and capacity to engage in future projects and programs. The focus groups will be facilitated by MHS and MACC staff members; the MHS staff in particular has significant and recent experience in meeting facilitation. Results of the meetings will be posted to the project web site.

To ensure the widest possible participation in the needs assessment and to validate the findings of the focus groups, the MHS and MACC will promote and host an online survey. The survey will be promoted through listservs developed by associations and interest groups. The survey will help to clarify and prioritize the ideas generated in the focus groups.

In the same phase, MHS and MACC staff will research models, guidelines and standards in the areas where they are currently working and which they expect to become conservation priorities. For example, MHS staff members are already collaborating with the MDL to develop simple and straightforward guidelines for MDL partners planning to preserve digital content. As part of that effort, they are looking closely at audio-visual materials converted to digital formats. This is an area where repositories in Minnesota, through the MDL, have clearly expressed a need for more help. These are immensely valuable resources in formats and media that present significant challenges.

They are threatened with both physical and technological obsolescence; they are very expensive to manage; they are difficult to process and describe; and they are stored in haphazard manners.

Similarly, recent experiences in both the state and the nation have demonstrated the value of providing a model emergency planning process to repositories with limited resources. Based on the existing programs of the MHS and MACC, along with examples and models from other states, the management team will research the implementation in Minnesota of the online tool “D-Plan” for creating an emergency plan.

These efforts will inform the draft of an implementation grant proposal by which the MACC and the MHS hope to position themselves:

- to establish a foundation of basic, good preservation practices in repositories across the region;
- to strengthen the existing education and field services programs at MACC and the MHS;
- to develop new areas of preservation expertise; and
- to produce and disseminate tangible products which would support practical preservation programs.

During the review and approval phase, the management team will attend the annual or ad hoc meetings of the constituent/stakeholder groups to present their preliminary conclusions. The advisory board will meet to discuss and review the draft products. On the basis of these efforts, the management team will revise the products. To disseminate the results of the planning process, the MHS and MACC will post all products to the project web site and promote the plan and its conclusions as part of their staffs’ routines.

3. Project Resources: Budget and Personnel

As noted, Shereelyn Ogden will be the project director/coordinator, working with Colin Turner and Patricia Ewer from the MACC and Bob Horton and Brian Szott from the MHS. This group will meet formally on a monthly basis and confer as needed on an ad hoc basis, in person, by phone or by email. Management activities, including attendance and participation in national meetings, such as the Connecting to Collections forums planned for 2008 and 2009, will be ongoing through the course of the project. As needed, the two organizations will provide the services of additional staff with specialized expertise in the course of the project. Together, the members of the management team will have primary responsibilities for managing the project, facilitating meetings, drafting reports and the survey and then completing the deliverables. They will work on a close and collaborative basis.

The budget for the project is fairly lean, with a significant component provided as match, through the contributed staff time of the MHS. The MACC participants will provide up to ten days each of their time during the course of the project, with an estimated value of \$888 per day. Turner’s time is donated; this has not been counted in the budget as matching funds, as no formal amount of match is required and as it will ease the documentation requirements. Ewer’s time, as she will be hired for the project, will be charged to the project budget. She will take the primary responsibility for facilitating and reporting on the focus groups. IMLS funds will also support clerical assistance for the project, as there will be a large amount of planning and communication necessary to facilitate the many meetings required. They will also support the travel, survey and meetings necessary to stay current with developments on the national level and to exchange ideas with the statewide constituencies for preservation.

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Sherelyn Ogden, the head of the MHS conservation program, has published extensively on conservation topics, most notably preparing NEDCC's *Preservation of Library and Archival Materials: A Manual* and also *Preservation Planning: Guidelines for Writing a Long-Range Plan*. She edited the recently published *Caring for American Indian Objects*, one of the core texts in the Connecting to Collections Bookshelf. Before coming to MHS, she served as Director of Field Services at MACC and established several of the educational and outreach programs there (see below). During her more than 35 years in the field, she has conducted more than 100 needs assessment surveys and lead dozens of workshops and training seminars.

As Curator of Art at Minnesota Historical Society, Brian Szott has the responsibility to develop, preserve and interpret a fine art collection of more than 6,000 objects. Through an active exhibition schedule, Szott works with many departments within the organization including conservation, historic sites and historic preservation. In addition, he has collaborated with art institutions throughout the state. With a graduate degree from the University of Minnesota in Museology, Szott has more than 25 years of curatorial and administrative experience. Recently, he completed a 13 week certificate program in Nonprofit Management at the University of St. Thomas.

Robert Horton is state archivist and director of the library, publications and collections division at the Minnesota Historical Society. Recently, Horton has worked primarily on information technology projects, including the State of Minnesota's Electronic Real Estate Recording Task Force; the San Diego Supercomputer Center's Archivists' Workbench and Persistent Archives Testbed projects; and the Legacy Tobacco Document Library at the University of California San Francisco's Center for Tobacco Control, Research and Education. Currently, he is directing the E-legislature project, funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission; the Geography and History Online project, funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services; and Minnesota's participation in the National Newspaper Digitization project, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Colin Turner, MACC's Executive Director for the past five years, is the general manager and overseer of the conservation and preservation services of the organization. He is responsible for hiring staff, administering salaries and benefits, planning and monitoring budgets, raising funds, and fostering cooperative relationships with regional and national organizations. After 11 years running a manufacturer's representative firm, then 4 years founding and running a publishing business, Mr. Turner assisted two nonprofit organizations: for 2 years as the Fundraising Director of KFAI Community Radio in Minneapolis and then 5 years as the Director of United Arts in St. Paul. Mr. Turner holds BA degrees in Anthropology and History and an advanced degree in Non-Profit Business Management. He is a Professional Associate of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works.

Patricia Ewer is the founder and chief conservator of Textile Objects Conservation and will be contracted through MACC for this project. She is a museum conservation professional with over 27 years of experience managing, developing and staffing conservation projects. Over the past two years she was Treatment Conservation Manager at Historic Royal Palaces (HRP), overseeing a treatment staff of 21, and co-managing a preventive staff of 11. Primary projects included: a) the 'State of the Interiors Estate' survey, which compiled the conservation needs, timelines and costs for the 65,000+ objects in the care of the HRP, and b) design and implementation of the 3 year Arms and Armour conservation program to meet the needs of 2,897 Royal Collection objects housed in the Hampton Court Palace King's Guard Chamber. Before moving to London Ms Ewer was the Senior Conservator with The Midwest Art Conservation Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota and prior to that she was Chief Conservator with Biltmore House (Asheville, NC).